

# Secrets of Attraction

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Summary: "Once my Stand, Divine Bastet, has you ensnared in its magnetic energy there is no way to escape its grasp."

## 1. Chapter 1

Stepping into the lobby of Cairo's international airport, Joseph Joestar couldn't help but stop and glance around suspiciously. It had been almost two months since his grandson defeated Dio once and for all but being back in the place where he'd lost so much had him on edge. The sacrifices his friends had made here were still very much a fresh wound in his heart and the fact he'd very nearly lost his own life as well wasn't exactly helping the matter.

But no matter where he looked, Joseph couldn't spot anyone who looked out of place. Not one familiar face in a sea of countless people, each and every one of them a stranger. It was a comforting feeling, even despite the smallest tinge of loneliness that accompanied it, so he forced himself to relax.

Dio was dead after all. Any of his subordinates that had survived their encounter with Joseph's merry little band of travelers had absolutely no reason to come after them now. Of course fanaticism counted for something, but with their master dead what else was there left to fight for? Revenge? Surely the Stand users who'd been fortunate enough to walk away from the battle would've realized after the fact that Dio had only been using them, more than willing to sacrifice their lives for his own desires.

Or at least, Joseph hoped that to be the case.

He wasn't entirely sure his body could handle another surprise attack from a Stand user so he really hoped that to be the case.

Adjusting his blazer, the older gentleman set off across the lobby towards the row of glass doors on the other side of the room. Being

back in Cairo felt so surreal, almost like a waking dream, but he'd given it a lot of thought before coming back here. Call it unfinished business if you will. Or perhaps he was just a foolish old man with a penchant for masochism but it had been nagging at the back of his mind even in the days leading up to their fateful encounter with Dio. And once everything had been said and done, in the wake of Dio's death and its aftermath, a few weeks had passed before those ugly thoughts reared their heads again. It was something he couldn't seem to shake so, knowing he had to at least try, he'd made the decision to return.

But what exactly did he think he was trying to do? That was the real question here. What did he hope to accomplish and, more importantly, what did he think was going to come of it?

Those were the questions that had run through his mind over and over again during the flight here but still, over ten hours later, he didn't have an answer for a single one of them. Maybe it was gut instinct or maybe he was starting to go senile in his old age but the why didn't really matter. It was the principal, he tried to convince himself.

Joseph pushed his way through the glass doors and stepped out into the blazing Egyptian heat. Somehow it felt even worse than he remembered and it certainly hadn't been a picnic the last time he'd been here so he had to take a moment to adjust himself to the weather. The first thing to go was the blazer. Then he rolled the sleeves of his white dress shirt up to his elbows and popped the top two buttons open. Why the hell did I wear thick socks today? He wondered, shifting uncomfortably under the sweltering heat.

Cicadas were chirping loudly in the distance and their high pitched songs only seemed to succeed in making the oppressive heat feel all the more suffocating. It was like stepping into a roaring furnace and he swore it hadn't been this bad before. He just couldn't fathom how was it even possible for the temperature to be any higher than it had been not even a whole two months ago. Was Cairo situated directly over top hell itself, or what?

Heaving a sigh, Joseph makes his way down the short set of stairs leading directly into the airport lobby and glances around for his rental car. There were so many people milling about that it takes him a moment to spot the sign but when he does, he waves to the man holding it. The Speedwagon Foundation employee waves back, dropping the sign to his side as he moves to meet Joseph halfway.

"Hello, sir! Did you have a nice flight?" The young man queries enthusiastically.

"As nice as constant turbulence and airplane food can be," Joseph grumbles back, shifting his blazer from one arm to another. He was already soaked in sweat. "Is the car ready?"

"Yes, sir! A full tank, just like you asked." He holds out the keys and Joseph takes them, grateful.

"Thank you. I'll call you if I need anything." The man nods in understanding and Joseph steps around him, making a bee line for the car he'd been standing in front of. The door slams shut and he immediately starts the engine, cranking the air to full blast. He

couldn't help but think that a heat stroke was certainly in his very near future.

Leaning back into the plush seat, he sits in silence for a moment and just basks in the cool air washing over him before reaching into his left pants pocket. He withdraws a neatly folded piece of paper and glances over its contents for what felt like the millionth time since he'd left New York that morning. It was an address to a hospital about two hours away. His ultimate destination and the reason he'd come back here.

But first â€¦

Joseph shifts the car into drive and checks over his shoulder before pulling away from the curb. Before he did anything else, he set off in the direction of where Dio's mansion had been. It was out of the way from the hospital but he knew he had to pay his respects to his fallen comrades before he moved on to his own personal matters. It was his duty to do \_that\_ much for them.

They'd paid the ultimate sacrifice to stop an evil monster, after all. If it weren't for them he wouldn't have still been alive to make this trip in the first place.

XxXxX

Night had fallen and with it came a certain amount of reprieve from the Egyptian summer. The humidity remained but the temperature was in the low seventies now and Joseph was thankful for even that much.

The hospital was in poor repair and, really, only a hospital in name. It looked like it might collapse at any given moment and the staff were few and far between. As he made his way down the barely lit halls, Joseph couldn't stop himself from thinking that this looked more like somewhere you come to die rather than a place you go to get better. He couldn't imagine a facility like this performing many life saving procedures but hopefully they weren't too bad at mending broken bones.

He finally comes across the room number he'd been looking for but hesitates just outside the door. Uncertainty rises in the pit of his stomach and he wonders if maybe this wasn't a bad idea after all. Perhaps he should have contacted her first before coming here? What if she didn't want to see him? What if she attacked him? There were so many what if's floating through his mind now that he could barely process them all.

But Joseph had never been the sort of man to let uncertainty stop him so, steeling himself, he gives the door a curt knock before turning the doorknob. The room is silent as he enters and for a split second he wonders if she isn't already asleep but then his gaze lands on the hospital bed and there she is. Wide awake and staring at him with an increasingly startled expression. She even seemed to grow a little pale at the sight of him. What was he, a ghost or something?

"Hello, Mariah."

Her lips move but no sound comes out. It was obvious she'd never expected to see him again so he waits patiently for her brain to

catch up.

"W-what are you doing here?" She finally manages to get out, her wavering voice barely above a whisper.

"I came to see how you were doing." Joseph sends a quick glance down the length of her body and he's not at all surprised to see she's still covered in casts. One of her legs, both arms, her entire midsection. There was even a small brace around her neck. He didn't even want to think about what she'd looked like immediately following their fight but he didn't feel much sympathy for her. She'd (literally) brought it on herself.

Mariah shakes her head, struggling to shift her broken body further away from him. Terror dances in her golden eyes but he stays motionless in the doorway. This was the kind of reaction he'd been expecting after all so he took no offense to her extreme reaction, not even when she started to frantically yell. "No â€| no! Just leave me alone!"

"I'm not here to hurt you." He tries to explain but she won't have it.

"Bullshit! You're here to finish the job! You just want me dead!"

Joseph frowns at that. "Hey! Technically you did all this to yourself. I never actually touched you."

"Shut up!" She shrieks as she finally manages to pull herself up into a sitting position. Her thin frame was starting to shake from the strain she was putting on her body and in the harsh fluorescent lighting she looked almost possessed at that moment. Gingerly, she slides her cast-free leg over the edge of the mattress only to quietly seethe in pain at the motion. Apparently it wasn't in working order just yet and he couldn't help but feel some amount of concern for her.

Joseph takes a step forward, already lifting his hand to reach out for her. "I don't think you should be trying to get up just yet. You need to stay in bed!"

"No! Get the hell away from me before I kill you!"

Joseph raises a brow at that, stopping mid step to look at her incredulously. "Hey, you're the one throwing around death threats here, not me." He then tsks, before quietly adding. "Besides you didn't exactly do a great job of that the first time you tried."

Mariah lets out some kind of unearthly scream that makes his eardrums vibrate and he watches with growing trepidation as she grabs an empty vase off her nightstand. Her movements were awkward and stiff thanks to the cast covering her arm from wrist to shoulder but that didn't deter her from slamming the vase against the stand and brandishing the broken piece at him. "Get out!"

Joseph lifts his hands in surrender and heaved a tortured sigh. What else could he do? It was obvious by now that even after all the commotion no one was coming to check on her but if she kept this up,

he was certain her body would give out on her sooner rather than later. And despite what she clearly believed, he really hadn't come all the way here just to kill her so it was probably best if he left now before the situation escalated further.

Not that she was much of a threat even with the broken vase she was wielding at him like some kind of old world street tough with a beer bottle but still.

"Fine, I'll leave. But I brought you something." Her heated glare never wavers as Joseph reaches into his back pocket and pulls out a small box of chocolates. He'd debated about getting it or not, unsure of the protocol for the situation, but since he hadn't been able to find a get well card that said something to the effect of 'you tried to kill me and nearly succeeded but I managed to trick you into smashing yourself between a bunch of junk and now every bone in your body is broken. Get well soon!' he'd decided to settle on the chocolate.

And showing up empty handed was certainly out of the question so he was going to make damn sure he gave it to her, one way or another.

Determined, he holds it up for her to see and silently hopes she'll understand that it wasn't a weapon or anything of the sort. Mariah doesn't move or speak, she just continues to watch him with a glare sharp enough to cut, so he uses an underhanded throw to toss it onto her bed. The box bounces once and settles next to her immobile leg but still, she doesn't even look at it. Her eyes were locked on him like a viper ready to strike and, conceding defeat, he offers her an apologetic smile. "Sorry for bothering you. Have a good night."

Careful not to make any sudden movements, he tips his hat and backs out into the hall. He'd never turn his back on her, especially not when she was holding a jagged piece of glass like that. He may have been a fool but he certainly wasn't a suicidal fool.

The door swings shut with a soft click and he stands there in the proceeding silence, just numbly staring at the faded wood before him.

Well, that went splendidly.

Had he really expected anything different? What other reaction could she have possibly had after the conclusion to their last encounter? Mind you, he certainly didn't feel bad for any of it. She'd made the decision to attack him all on her own and he'd even given her two chances to stop before delivering the final blow, but it was obvious she hadn't gotten over that yet. When deciding whether or not to track her down, Joseph had certainly considered the possibility that thoughts of revenge might be clouding her mind but that didn't seem to be the case here.

No, Mariah was just terrified of him. Just like all the other Stand users he'd encountered on his way to Cairo, she'd never expected to be defeated. She thought she was invincible and that had been her downfall. She'd been so confident when him and Abdul had surrounded her on that back street that she hadn't even realized what kind of trouble she was in. Narcissism affected her judgment, made her

complacent in those final moments, and that was the only reason his plan had worked. If she'd just stopped for a minute and looked around, Mariah would have surely realized that standing between them was a very bad idea. If she'd figured that out and moved, he would've died right then and there.

And if Mariah had won, she certainly wouldn't have paid any visits to his grave (if he'd been given one) let alone track him down in a hospital like he had done for her.

Maybe he really was just an old fool after all.

Finally turning away, Joseph silently makes his way back down the hall with doubts racing through his mind. He didn't like doubting himself but, in cases like this, it was sometimes hard not to.

And foxy grandpa strikes again!

Just kidding, just kidding. This is my OTP so please feel free to tell me what you think! And if you happen to be reading this expecting a romance novel, please don't. Its gonna' be smut with a plot so buckle up!

## 2. Chapter 2

For better or worse, Joseph didn't immediately drive back to Cairo and get on the first plane home the following morning.

Common sense would dictate that to be the best decision given Mariah's adverse reaction to him suddenly showing up out of the blue but after sleeping on it, he was more determined then ever to get through to her. After all, Joseph Joestar was nothing if not stubborn. It was one of the few things he never managed to grow out of no matter how old he got and he liked to think that was one of his strengths.

When others would give up, he'd press on.

When the odds were unfairly stacked, he'd re-deal the cards.

When the situation seemed hopeless, he'd keep pushing until he got what he wanted.

And Joseph was the kind of man who got results, either through stupid luck or persistence and this was no different. The moment he woke up the next day, he already knew without a doubt that he was just going to have to keep pushing until she gave in.

But what exactly did he want from her?

He still hadn't quite figured that out but he knew he couldn't back down now. Whatever it was pulling him back to her was inescapable and if he retreated now (strategically or otherwise) he'd never even have the chance to find the answers to any of these questions.

Maybe he was still just the same headstrong kid who'd fought the Pillar Men tooth and nail or maybe he just wanted to poke the sleeping cobra until it turned on him. It was hard to say which way he was leaning in this situation and it could have even been a

mixture of the two, but Joseph was a firm believer in shoot first, ask questions later. So it was with a determined mind that he vowed to return to the hospital.

But the one thing age \_\_had\_\_ taught him was tact so he waited a few days before chancing another visit. In that time, he thought a lot about strategy and considered the best ways to get Mariah to just listen to him. He was sure that if he could simply explain himself she'd come around. At least enough to let him into her room without threatening his life.

\_\_Again\_\_.

So when the sun rose on the fourth day, Joseph felt confident in his preparations.

Upon arriving he realized that, much to his own surprise, the hospital looked somehow worse in the daylight. For some reason he started to feel just a little bit sorry for Mariah and he couldn't help but wonder if the staff were taking proper care of her. A building as run down as this was barely fit for people to live in let alone the sick and injured. Could they possibly be doing her more harm than good here?

He could feel his overprotective daddy mode slowly kicking in and he knew he'd have to find out about that soon. For his own peace of mind, if nothing else.

The door was open when he found her room again and he chanced a peak inside. Mariah was sitting on the bed, engrossed in a book propped up on her lap. If she had any idea that he was standing there, she certainly didn't give any indication. Preparing himself for the worst, Joseph reaches up and gently knocks on the door.

The sound draws her attention up from the book and she turns her head, stiffening at the sight of him. \_\_Here it comes ...\_\_

"Didn't I tell you to leave me alone?"

Joseph blinks widely at her. That was \_\_not\_\_ the reaction he'd been anticipating. Was she up to something? Or did she have a change of heart in his absence?

Either way, he was going to proceed with caution. Extreme caution. "You did," he says slowly, trying to look harmless under her cold gaze. "And I did. But I'm back to see if you've changed your mind about that."

"I haven't." Mariah snaps, the smallest hint of irritation lacing her tone and belying her true emotions.

Fighting the urge to pout, Joseph tries to change the subject. "Did you like the chocolate I got you?"

"I threw it in the trash."

\_\_Damn, she's not missing a single beat here.\_\_ He decides to try again. "How are you feeling today?"

She snarls at that, immediately losing her composure. "I \_\_feel\_\_

like I want to kill you!"

"Hey, hey! Lets all calm down here!" He says quickly, knowing that he has to diffuse her temper before it got any further than that. This was an instance where he both had to tread carefully \_\_and\_\_ act fast which made for a rather dicey situation indeed. "Look, I got you a new vase! Y'know, since you broke the last one."

Reaching into the small paper bag he'd been carrying, Joseph procures a delicate looking porcelain vase which he holds up proudly for her to see. All she does is stare at him blankly though, clearly not amused by the gift or his misplaced joke.

He offers her a sincere smile and takes a tentative step forward. Mariah doesn't protest, merely continues to stare him down like some barely restrained animal. The glint dancing in her eyes, he could see it clear as day. She was guardedly observing him, ready to pounce the second he made a wrong move.

But Joseph was confident in his reaction time and he takes another step, then another, slowly approaching her at a wide breadth. He made sure to stay far enough away from the bed that, even if she hadn't been weighed down by heavy plaster casts, she still wouldn't have been able to easily reach him. Mariah's stand didn't have any offensive abilities so as long as he took care not to touch any questionably placed electrical outlets, he'd been fine.

Or so he hoped.

He comes to a stop with the nightstand squarely between them and slowly, carefully places the vase on top. Still, she doesn't utter a single word. After a moment spent in silence, he decides to press on.

"Did the doctors tell you how long you'll have to wear those casts for?"

She slowly blinks at that, so slowly in fact that it feels like another whole minute has passed before her eyelashes tickle her cheeks. Then they snap back open and she answers tersely. "Another month, at the least."

Joseph can't help but wince. "I'm sorry to hear that."

"No you're not." She all but seethes and he realizes that this approach just isn't working. He'd have to try another angle.

"You're right, I'm not." He rumbles, holding up a hand to stop her when she jerks at the tone in his voice. Sighing, he grabs one of the two plastic chairs from against the wall and takes a seat, mindful of the distance between himself and the bed. "I'm not sorry that I had to hurt you because if I hadn't, you would've killed me. Am I right?"

Mariah glares at him but doesn't say anything.

So he continues. "And I gave you not one but two chances to stop on your own, did I not? I didn't \_\_want\_\_ to hurt you but you left me with no choice, Mariah. And honestly, you made it quite clear that if we didn't do something drastic you'd keep going. I'm not sorry for



hurting you but I am sorry that it turned out this way. I wish that entire mess could have been avoided but you're one hell of a stubborn young lady, you know that?"

"And you're one hell of a stubborn old man." She shoots back hotly.

Joseph laughs boisterously at that. "You're right! Its the only thing thats kept me alive this long!"

Mariah was clearly simmering in her thoughts, the small tick above her eyebrow making it quite obvious that she was pissed off with his act but at least she wasn't threatening him anymore. That only seemed to egg him on now, he was determined to win this. He'd played this game with Jotaro plenty of times when he was little and he sure as hell could play it with her.

"Oh? Nothing else to say?" He prods, keeping his voice light and amiable. "I remember the first time we met and you were quite talkative back then but perhaps now that we're alone, you're feeling shy?"

The slightest flush colors her cheeks and he knows he's on the right track now. He just had to keep pushing.

"Don't flatter yourself, grandpa!" Mariah hisses, her hands balling into weak little fists on her lap. He was getting close.

"But it was you who flattered me, remember? All those things you said when you thought you'd beaten me," Joseph smirks and cocks a haughty brow in her direction, wiggling it for emphasis. "If I hadn't been so distracted at the time, I would've blushed! Lets see, what was it? Something about me being impressive? Or was it amazing?"

Mariah's body was starting to tremble now from barely suppressed rage. She was going to explode, he could feel it. "Ill kill you." She vows in a quaking whisper. "I'll kill you with my bare hands!"

"I don't think so, little girl." Joseph was speaking in his 'serious' voice now. It always got Holly and Jotaro's attention and, just like he knew it would, it certainly had Mariah's attention too. "You couldn't even beat me with your Stand, what makes you think you could get the job done with just you're skinny little arms? I defeated you, Mariah. Accept that. I won and now I'm here trying to make things right so why won't you let me?"

And just like that, the dam broke. Tears gushed forth, sobs shook her body and she screamed. She screamed at him but not like she had done so previously. The truth came flooding out of her mouth in angry waves, slamming into him with the force of concrete but he sat and listened. She wailed and for the first time since they'd met, he heard her true feelings come spilling forth in a torrential downpour.

"Make things right? How are you going to make things right, you idiot? Lord Dio is dead, my body is broken and I have no where to go from here! I don't even have the money to pay the hospital! Thats why they stuck me in this shit hole! I used every last cent I had to come here and be with Lord Dio and you took that away from me! You took

everything away from me! How are you going to make that right! You can't! You can't ..."

Trailing off into uncontrollable sobs, Mariah turned away from him and shoved her face into the pillow. Her body shook with the force of it and Joseph waited patiently for her to get it all out of her system. He'd dealt with this kind of thing before, more so from Jotaro than Holly as his grandson was far more prone to bottling things up than his daughter was. Letting Mariah vent was the only way he could think of to get her to open up to him but to do that he'd had to push her to her very limit.

He wasn't particularly proud of that but he knew it was for the best. And maybe that's why he'd felt so compelled to find her.

Perhaps both of them had just needed some closure.

The minutes stretch on like hours but finally Mariah's crying eases then subsides. Silence claims the room until he finally ventures to ask, "Do you feel better now?"

At first she doesn't respond but then, so quietly he almost doesn't catch it, she says, "Get out."

As simple as that.

Joseph observes her for a moment before standing and moving closer to the bed. Surely she could hear his footsteps on the dirty linoleum but she didn't make a peep. Standing over her now, he hesitates for only a second before reaching down and gently patting her head.

And she lets him.

Smiling to himself, Joseph nods and turns towards the door. "I'll come by and see you tomorrow, Mariah. Have a nice night."

The door clicks shut behind him with finality.

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The following afternoon, Joseph drives back into Cairo.

It is not the shabby, rundown hospital which he visits that day but rather the well equipped, well staffed major hospital in the city center. He parks his rental car and gets out, a slight pep in his step as he makes his way inside.

After checking in at the front desk, he navigates his way through the winding halls until he locates the room he'd been searching for. The door is open and inviting so he just waltzes right in, grinning like an idiot.

"Hello, Mariah!"

The woman in question jumps in surprise from her spot on the sterile bed, her expression immediately shifting to one of confusion. "Joseph! I don't understand! Did you arrange this?"

"I did indeed, young lady!" He laughs boisterously, clearly rather proud of himself.

But Mariah doesn't quite share the same sentiment. "Why would you do that? I can't afford any of this!"

Smiling, he walks right over to her bed without a hint of hesitation. "I know and you don't have to worry about that. I'll take care of everything. I told you I wanted to make things right, didn't I?"

She frowns at that, surprising him slightly. He certainly hadn't been expecting her to grovel in thanks or anything but that wasn't exactly the reaction he'd anticipated either.

"This isn't going to bring Lord Dio back, y'know ..."

Scratching his chin thoughtfully, Joseph can't keep the derision out of his tone when he says, "Eh, you don't need him anyway. He was just using you for his own purposes. You know that right?"

Mariah's face hardens but rather than start screaming at him, she simply turns away.

He chuckles at that. "Now, now. You're still alive and thats what matters so you should focus on getting better instead of dwelling on the past." Glancing at her bedside table, he catches sight of the vase he'd given her. \_\_Good, they remembered to grab it for me.\_\_

Reaching behind his back, Joseph withdraws a single, pink carnation from his pants pocket and the plastic wrapping crinkles gently. She glances at him from the corner of her eye but doesn't remark on the flower as he unwraps it. "I thought this might brighten up your new room a bit and what good is a vase without flowers, huh?" Reaching over, he casually slides the flower into the vase without a word of complaint from Mariah.

He turns to look back at her and she quickly directs her attention elsewhere, making sure it obvious that she was unimpressed. Joseph doesn't fall for it though and he chuckles gently as he pulls a cushioned chair closer to the bed and starts to sit down.

He catches himself halfway through the motion though and jolts back up to his feet, spinning in a whirl to look down at the electrical socket planted smack dab in the middle of the seat.

"What the hell is this!" He shouts, twisting back around to look at her incredulously.

Smiling coquettishly, Mariah bats her eyes at him. "Oooh, you caught me!"

Anger bubbling inside, Joseph takes a threatening step towards her. "Why you â€¦ I oughtta' put you over my knee for that!"

Mariah starts, all the amusement quickly draining from her face. "W-what? Don't joke about that, you old pervert!"

"You think I'm joking?" He grins evilly, getting even closer until he was looming right over her. "Just wait until those casts come off, missy! I'll show you whose joking!"

He was joking, of course, but the uncertainty in her golden eyes made it quite clear that she believed him.

Oh, this was going to be fun stay in Cairo.

### 3. Chapter 3

And so, two weeks passed by without incident.

They seamlessly fell into a routine that would have seemed impossible given the circumstances of their initial meeting. Joseph came to visit her every day and when he'd leave for the night, he always found himself thinking of her as less and less of a Stand user. In fact, by the time the first week came to a close he couldn't view her as anything other than a regular woman. To be honest, he sometimes forgot about her Divine Bastet but of course she occasionally found sneaky little ways to remind him. Mariah was stubborn to a fault and still tried to catch him off guard with her Stand every other day or so, but an old man was never fooled twice. Every time he caught her in the act, always spotting the out of place electrical sockets before he could accidentally touch them as they were quite hard to miss, he'd pretend to scold her much to her chagrin. But it was never serious, not really. He wasn't entirely sure what she would do if he did happen to touch one by mistake but he wasn't going to let that happen and find out.

On one hand, it seemed like he was playing a very dangerous game with her but the little things she'd let slip, the small truths, convinced him that she was harmless to him now. Actually, he'd started to feel rather close to her over the last few days.

It was an odd routine indeed but she seemed happy with it so Joseph was content to let it continue. He certainly thought of her like a second daughter now but even through all the constant joking and fatherly instinct, there was still something else there. Something different. A feeling he couldn't quite place even though it was oddly familiar to him somehow and it left him baffled. He'd truly believed that paying for her medical bills would break him free of whatever had brought him here in the first place but it only seemed to make it worse.

Every morning, his first thought upon waking was her.

Each trip to the hospital had him giddy and the drive home felt oddly lonely for some inexplicable reason.

It was a strange back and forth that he didn't fully understand but he was in too deep now to turn back. Even if he'd wanted to go back to New York, Joseph was far too invested in Mariah's care to just wish her the best and hop on a plane. Besides, the longer he spent time with her the more obvious it became that she really didn't have anywhere else to go.

No one other than him ever came to visit. No family or friends. She never even received any mail. He'd asked her about it once, where her parents were, and she'd simply answered that she didn't have any. Joseph wasn't sure if that meant they were dead or something else, maybe disownment, but he never brought it up again. He'd learned quite quickly that Dio really had been her entire world and he

couldn't help but find that quite sad. So he stayed, even when those confusing back-and-forth feelings grew stronger and stronger. Abandoning her was just simply out of the question now.

It was kind of funny, really. At some point he'd managed to completely convince himself that his strange feelings were indeed coming from a fatherly place but that illusion was promptly shattered when he startled awake one morning with an audible gasp.

\_\_Mariah's long, slender legs wrapped tight around his waist, her cinnamon colored skin flushed and sleek with sweat. Her hair tousled and messy, plump lips gleaming in the light as she leaned in to kiss him. A dainty hand slowly made its way down the length of his stomach. Inch by excruciating inch until â€|\_\_

Joseph sat in his bed for a long time, soaked in a cold sweat as those fleeting memories played on repeat in his mind over and over again. The images were burned into his brain and he wasn't sure how he would ever be able to look Mariah in the eye again. For the first time since returning to Cairo, he dreaded going to see her that day.

But he felt like he had a responsibility to be there for her now so Joseph put his big boy pants on and drove to the hospital with his thoughts racing a mile a minute.

Its funny how much clarity retrospect brings. He'd been so perplexed about â€" well, everything regarding her but now it was all crystal clear.

The reason he hadn't been able to stop thinking about her even when he and the others were finishing the final leg of their journey to Dio's mansion.

The reason he'd started thinking about her again weeks later when he was back home with his wife.

The reason why he'd felt so utterly compelled to track her down, fly back to Egypt and then do everything in his power just to get her to open up to him. All so he could stay with her and make sure she was alright?

The human mind was a dark, confusing place and Joseph couldn't come up with a reasonable answer as to why he'd immediately become so fixated on her and to such an extent at that. Of course Mariah was beautiful, that went without saying. But she'd also tried to kill him. Wasn't there a part of the brain dedicated to self preservation or something? How could he have possibly become so enamored with a woman who'd very nearly succeeded in ending his life? It was almost unthinkable, which was why the thought had never crossed his mind before.

Sure those feelings he'd been experiencing in the preceding days had raised several personal questions but he'd never even humored the thought! It hadn't crossed his mind once and now this? It was almost like someone was playing a \_\_very\_\_ sick joke on him.

But that dream left no room for doubts and now his real intentions in coming here were suddenly as clear as day. And the fact he'd tried to reason that away as fatherly instinct made him physically ill. How

could he have been so blind to the truth? Especially when, looking back on it, the facts had been waving right in front of his face the entire time. It was so obvious now!

And thanks to that dream, he was now unable to wave it off or live in denial any longer. Because even though it was only a dream, it was more than enough proof that he'd made a mistake coming back to Egypt. Sure, Joseph hadn't even thought about kissing her let alone any of \_\_that\_\_ but the dream itself wasn't so much the issue here. It was the fact he'd very much enjoyed it.

Truthfully, he'd enjoyed it a little \_\_too\_\_ much.

And he felt guilty about that. He loved Suzie with every fiber of his being and he wasn't sure why he'd do something like this to threaten their relationship. He'd never purposely do anything to hurt her, especially not something like \_\_this,\_\_ which just made him further question why he'd thought coming here would be a good idea. Or appropriate for that matter.

On his way to the hospital, Joseph tried over and over again to convince himself that he hadn't knowingly come to Egypt with the sole intention of starting a relationship with Mariah but the more he thought about it, reflected on his actions in the last two weeks, the more he realized that in a way he kind of \_\_had\_\_. Perhaps only subconsciously, but still. He'd wanted her and he'd traveled halfway across the globe to try and get her. Hadn't he already broken Suzie's trust in a way? Wasn't he already halfway to cheating?

And worse, did he really have it in himself to betray his wife like that?

Yet, despite the quickly mounting horror, there was \_\_still\_\_ a part of him that couldn't stop thinking about Mariah. Since they'd gotten married all those years ago, Joseph hadn't been with any woman other than Suzie in that time and he hadn't exactly been a Casanova before meeting her. He'd only been with, what? Four or five women in his whole life? And he'd been content with that, up until recently apparently, but now he couldn't stop his mind from wandering back to that dream. He wondered what Mariah's tight body would feel like pressed up against his own or how she'd sound moaning in pleasure underneath him. She was so beautiful and enticing, and flirty too. Mariah was practically the embodiment of sexy and he wanted to know what it would be like to sleep with a girl like that.

\_\_Maybe if its just one time â€¦ and Suzie would never have to find out â€¦\_\_

No, no, no! This wasn't even up for debate! It was completely out of the question!

Struggling to keep his composure behind the wheel, Joseph has to force himself to remember his obligation as Mariah's sort-of caretaker. There was a job he had to do now and once he felt comfortable leaving her on her own, he'd hop back on a plane and never see her again. He just had to be strong enough to get through this and then he wouldn't have to deal with it ever again! If he just firmly sat all of this aside and focused on the end goal he'd be able to go back to living a peaceful life again.

If he was weak and gave in, he'd never be able to do that. Suzie would have his head served on a platter if she ever found out so it was really better if he just avoided it altogether.

Right?

Joseph had to force himself to remain calm as he makes his way down the hospital halls, very much on the verge of panic. He really wasn't looking forward to seeing Mariah today and he kept toying with the idea of just turning right back around and calling her from his hotel to explain his absence. But he'd dug this grave with his own two hands and he was obligated to see it through until the very end. He wasn't going to allow himself to run away from this problem, he'd face it head on and kick its ass!

He'd just act the same as always and no matter where his mind might wander, never let his resolve waver. He was stronger than his emotions \_\_and\_\_ her magnetic pull, dammit! \_\_Just play it cool, just play it cool.\_\_

Steeling his resolve, Joseph walks through her door and stops dead in his tracks.

Mariah was sitting on the bed, as usual, but there was something missing. Something all too obvious.

One of her casts.

"Holy shit!" He blurts out, surprise making his eyes grow comically large. "When did they take the cast off your leg?"

She glances up at him and slowly brings her leg up into a bent position on the mattress as if to show it off. "This morning," She purrs with a sly smile.

He watches her with great interest, unable to tear his eyes away especially when her hospital gown bunches up with the movement. The last time he'd seen so much of her thigh, Mariah had almost killed him and she'd also been wearing stockings at the time but now he could see the skin there was the same flawless bronze as the rest of her.

Forcing himself to look elsewhere, Joseph tries to remind himself of both Suzie and his objective here. He had to stand firm no matter what! His strength was greater than this temptation, he was sure of it.

"Thats good!" He says, forcing himself to use a neutral tone lest he arise any suspicions. If he started acting different she'd start asking questions and he had every intention of avoiding that if he could. She never needed to know about that dream. No one did.

Moving closer, he comes to stand next to her bed. Joseph gives her perfect legs another glance under the guise of simply looking only to realize the leg she'd just moved was the one that hadn't been in a cast when he'd first arrived in Cairo. The other one was laying straight out as if still restrained, in fact he hadn't noticed her moving it once since he got there.

"Hows it feel? Are you glad to have the cast off?"

Mariah pouts at that, shifting again so that her good leg was laying on the bed once more but bent at an angle that pulled her gown up even higher. \_\_Don't look, Joseph! Do not look! \_\_"Its all stiff and sore, I can't really move it a lot yet. They said it might take a while to get my full mobility back."

"I see."

She perks right back up though, sending Joseph another foxy smile. Unbeknownst to her, that expression makes his pulse quicken. "I know! Why don't you massage it for me?"

He jerks as if she'd sucker punched him. "What!"

"Oh, come on! I'm sure it'll help! Pleeaaase?" Mariah bats her eyelashes at him and he quickly turns his back on her, much to her surprise.

He had to come up with something fast, anything to get him out of this room. It was too dangerous to be alone with her. "I don't think thats a good idea. I'm not a doctor and I might do more harm than good," He says calmly even though his brain was going a mile a minute now. \_\_Thats good!Quick thinking! Now make an excuse to leave!\_\_ "I'll go find a nurse who knows how to do it properly."

Positive that he'd made the perfect getaway for himself, Joseph takes a single step before she speaks again. "No, I want \_\_you\_\_ to do it!"

He freezes and slowly glances over his shoulder, fearing the worst. Just as he'd expected, Mariah was looking up at him with an expression that could only be interpreted as 'come hither'. Or his fevered mind was perceiving it like that. Shit! Joseph wasn't even sure what was happening anymore.

He tries once more. "Your body is still healing, Mariah. If I hurt you again, I wouldn't -"

"I don't care about that!" She insists as her lips slowly curve into a smile. "You've taken such great care of me already and I know you wont disappoint me now ..."

\_\_Well, if she says it like that.\_\_

Fighting the internal desire to groan, Joseph hesitantly turns back around. All he'd do is massage her leg and nothing more. No matter what she said or did! He was a grown man and fully capable of saying no, he'd done it plenty of times in the past. This situation was no different, he just had to remain firm.

"Fine, but nothing else. Got it?" He grumbles, looking just about as grumpy as he sounded.

"But of course!" She giggles before shifting into a more comfortable position. "What else could there be?"

Joseph deigns not to respond to that and instead pulls a chair over to her bedside. Taking a seat, he takes a calming breath and regards her legs like a poisonous snake, curled and ready to strike. Her



behavior seemed suspicious but he had himself so worked up at this point that couldn't tell if this was just her naturally flirty personality and he was just being paranoid about it. Either way, he'd simply have to focus on getting this done and over with as fast as possible so he could put some distance between them.

How the hell did he always get himself into these hairy situations?

Silently, Joseph reaches out and takes her right ankle in a delicate hold. He wasn't exactly a massage therapist any more than he was a doctor though, so he wasn't entirely sure what he was doing. His first instinct was to gently roll the joint, carefully turning it this way and that to get the muscle loose. As he works his way up towards her calf, it became apparent that her muscles were indeed knotted and tender. Tiny little whimpers slipped passed her lips as he worked them, using his fingers to isolate the knots and kneed them out. The room was deathly silent while he worked and Joseph honestly wasn't sure if he would've preferred her to be running her mouth at that moment or not.

But he was too worried about slipping up and saying something inappropriate if he tried to start a conversation so he didn't even try.

By the time he got up to her knee, he was actually feeling pretty good about his massage skills. It seemed like he'd actually succeeded in smoothing out the muscles in her leg rather well and his hands start to slow, ready to call it a wrap. But then she suddenly breaks the silence, startling him. "Higher."

Joseph glances up, looking at her suspiciously but she calmly returns his gaze with a blank expression. He sighs again and resumes the task before him, moving above her knee to massage the lower portion of her thigh.

"Higher." She repeats after a few minutes had passed.

He hesitates but complies, moving up to the mid thigh. Mariah's skin was firm but soft and he stared at it as though hypnotized while he worked at the muscles underneath. This was far too dangerous of a situation to let it continue. He had to find a way out of here before -

"Higher."

Joseph stops his ministrations, brows furrowing with a gradually increasing irritation. He remained silent for so long that Mariah actually blinks down at him, trying to prop her upper half up so she can get a better look.

"Whats wrong? Scared?" Her tone was teasing, unabashedly prodding him. Damn, she \_\_was\_\_ doing this on purpose.

"I have a wife." He says at last.

Mariah makes a soft 'ooh' sound and relaxes back against the pillows. "Good, maybe she taught you a trick or two. Keep going."

Growling under his breath, Joseph starts back up again and his

fingers slip under the hem of her gown. He knew that if he didn't stop soon he'd be past the point of no return but he couldn't. Or wouldn't. He was completely under her spell now, unable to do anything other than follow her directions like a mindless slave. His pulse raced as he rubbed around the circumference of her thigh, fully aware that any higher and he'd reach her hip but at the same time hoping for the chance. Shit, this was exactly what he'd been worried about. He'd gone too far and now he felt like he was trapped in her sultry tones, as unwilling to put an end to it as he was unable. He wanted it too bad. He should have been adamant about not doing this but now it was too late and -

"Higher."

Meeting her cool gaze with his own, Joseph doesn't hesitate to comply this time and his hands slide right up along her smooth skin.

His fingers running along the outside of her leg slide up and under the curve of her ass and the one on the inside presses firmly into the joint of her hip. She jumps slightly, looking honestly surprised, but his own expression remains neutral. Her labia were warm against his knuckles and he could feel the tickle of hair, which struck him as slightly odd. Mariah seemed like the type to shave it all off but, then again, she has been in the hospital for over two months now. It was probably hard to maintain a smooth pussy with casts covering the majority of your body.

Still not breaking eye contact, he starts to massage both areas. Her ass was ridiculously soft and it molded to the shape of his hand almost seamlessly, just enough give to make it the perfect mix of plump and firm. The inside of her thigh was slightly less fun to play with but her pussy more than made up for that with her soft labia brushing against his knuckles with every single movement. The heat coming off her was ridiculous and he made a point to move his hand so his index knuckle just barely ran along her moist lips.

Mariah twitched slightly every now and again but refused to break his gaze, staring him down in a way that almost seemed to suggest that she was just daring him to keep it up.

So he did.

All of his concerns from that morning were long gone by now and he takes his hand off her inner thigh, slowly running the back of his knuckles up along the length of vagina. She shudders at that, her eyes fluttering for a split second before locking back onto his a second later. The amount of fluid he found here made it obvious that she was enjoying this just as much as he was, and that knowledge somehow empowered him. He'd never even thought about fingering a girl half his age before but here they were, and she seemed to be enjoying it.

He couldn't turn back now.

Joseph leans a little closer and slips a finger between the folds of her labia, finding that she was indeed soaking wet just as he'd thought. Her skin was ridiculously soft here and he takes a moment to trace the length of her vagina from the top to the bottom, just admiring the feeling, before settling on her clit. Mariah tenses, biting down on her lip to stop herself from moaning as he lazily

flicks the pad of his finger against it. Up and down, up and down then side to side. She trembles under his attention and tries to spread her legs further apart for him.

She doesn't get very far but its enough to give him more room and he reaches further up her gown, pressing his finger more firmly against her clit now. He rubs it in a circle excruciatingly slowly and the rock hard erection straining against his pants gives a twitch when she finally lets out the smallest of moans.

The sound seems to pierce his very brain, shooting right into his skull and setting off every single alert possible. This was just too much, he couldn't take it. Even now in the heat of the moment he was fully aware of what he was doing and he also knew it was wrong but Joseph was too worked up to care. He had to have her, he \_\_had\_\_ to.

Suddenly standing, he grabs her legs with both hands and pulls them further apart before flipping up her hospital gown and diving underneath. Mariah jumps hard at that but the remaining casts leave her more or less immobile in this position, all she can do is squirm when he presses his face right up against her pussy. His beard felt rough against her skin but somehow it wasn't an unpleasant feeling and she tries to push down against his face with a small whimper.

Joseph had a firm hold on both of her thighs and he helps her slide further down, taking a deep breath as he does so. She smelled amazing to him, a fragrant mixture of sweet and salty, natural musk and the scented soaps the hospital supplied. His mind was a whirlwind of thoughts but none of them had to do with the fact he was cheating on his wife.

No, the only thought racing through his mind at that moment was that he had to have her.

He \_\_needed \_\_her.

Climbing up halfway onto the bed, Joseph shoves his entire face right against her vagina and starts to hungrily lap at her clit with an urgency he'd never felt before. Mariah finally loses some of her composure and freely moans, awkwardly reaching down with her casts to grab at his hair. She curses under her breath and squirms harder, faster, bucking against his face desperately.

It doesn't take long for her thighs to start trembling but Joseph is relentless, pressing his tongue tight against her clit and moving it up and down forcefully. She hisses, trying to arch her back but the cast around her middle prevents that. She was breathing heavily now and he pushes on, lapping her up like his life depended on it. He was practically devouring her, his mind and body alike a frenzied mess.

Minutes pass then something deep inside her finally snaps so hard that even he can feel it and she lets out a single, barely restrained scream before clamping her teeth down on her bottom lip as she rides out her orgasm. Her body twitches wildly underneath him, every muscle contracting erratically against his face as he continues to assault her clit with his tongue. It was only when Mariah started to whimper and feebly try to push at him that he stops and rises up to look at

her.

Her face was flushed and coated in the finest sheen of sweat, her golden eyes staring down at him in a daze like some kind of ethereal, satisfied goddess.

And in that moment, it hit him.

The weight of the situation rocks him to his very core and he hastily climbs off the bed. She makes a confused sound but he ignores her, making a quick bee line for the bathroom in her room. Joseph can't even look at himself in the mirror as he turns on the cold water and viciously scrubs his face in an attempt to get rid of the evidence. Her taste, her smell. God, what has he done?

After a few minutes had passed, he finally steps out of the bathroom with every intention of bolting for the door but she calls out to him from the bed, stopping him.

"Joseph? What are you doing?"

He was halfway to the door and he could practically hear the sounds of freedom calling his name. So close but yet so far. "I'm leaving." He answers simply, refusing to look back at her.

"Don't you want me to take care of you now?" Mariah sounded confused but he couldn't bear to stay in the room any longer. He had to get out of there.

"No. I'm going back to the hotel." And before she could say another word, he briskly makes his escape.

Internal guilt made him self conscious of every single person he passed in the halls and even though no one gave him so much as a second glance, he couldn't help but think they were judging him. They had every right to though, he was a cheater. He'd betrayed Suzie, their relationship, the very sanctity of their marriage. How was he so weak? How had he let the situation escalate like that? Especially when he'd come here today with the explicit intention of not giving in to the temptation?

Damn! He really was a fool after all.

Two chapters updated at once!? Madness!

No, I just already had both of these posted on AO3 and suddenly realized I hadn't updated the story here so I figured I'd just post both. Thanks for reading and, as always, I appreciate comments!

End  
file.